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## ARC COMMISSION MEETS WITH POPE

NEW YORK -- A week-long Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue ended with a private audience with Pope John Paul II in which the pontiff praised the accomplishments of the work but cautioned "that much remains to be done to understand the mystery of Christ's Church."

The audience -- at the papal summer residence north of Rome -- followed a formal meeting of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission to review a 1977 document on authority. In its formal statement, the commission noted that it had achieved "further convergence" on this issue and hoped to issue a final report in England in about a year.

The Rt. Rev. Arthur A. Vogel, Bishop of West Missouri, is co-chairman of the American Anglican-Roman Catholic talks and serves as the Episcopal Church delegate to the international panel. While at the talks, and later with the pope, he explored the ramifications of the announcement that the Roman Catholic Church would allow certain dissident former Episcopalians to join the Church and to become priests.

In a conversation upon his return, Bishop Vogel expressed confidence that the actions would be undertaken in a "pastorally sensitive and theologically correct fashion." Each case, he reported, would be studied and acted on individually.

Although the pope did not address the issue in his remarks to the theologians, he raised the question of priestly orders as one of the practical matters still to be faced.

"Questions of (priestly) orders, mixed marriages, shared sacramental life, and Christian morality -- these can move toward solution only as our understanding of the mystery of the Church deepens," he said.

Pope John Paul praised the commission members, who, he said, "for 14 years have been working tirelessly for the cause of unity on the basis of a serious theological dialogue rooted in Scriptures and in ancient common tradition."

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The pope said the members had gone "behind the habit of thought and expression born and nourished in enmity and controversy, to scrutinize together the great common treasure, to clothe it in a language at once traditional and expressive of insights of an age which no longer glories in religious strife, but seeks to come together in listening to the quiet voice of the Spirit."

"We have a common treasure," the pope stressed. "It is a treasure which we must recover and in the fullness of which we must share, not losing certain distinctive qualities and gifts which have been ours even in our divided state."

"But," the pontiff added, "you yourselves realize that much remains to be done to understand the mystery of Christ's Church, the sacrament of salvation, in its fullness. This is our abiding challenge."

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